

Talking to Kids about Stressful Situations

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With so much information out there, how are we expected to really know what's going to help our kids? It helps to look for the common themes. For example, are you wondering how to talk to your kids about stressful situations, such as COVID-19?

Some common themes experts are recommending:

- 1 Remain calm and reassuring:** If you remain calm when they are not, they will eventually feel and mirror your calm.
- 2 Make yourself available to talk:** Disconnect from whatever task needs to be done and focus all your attention on your child. Respond with love and assure them you are here for them no matter what. You might say, for example, "You are scared right now, and that is ok. We will get through this together."
- 3 Avoid blaming:** Most of the time stressful situations are complicated. Blaming one person or group causes more anxiety for children. Instead, help your family focus on what they can control, like hand washing!
- 4 Limit access to social media and TV:** It's ok to turn off the news for a little while. Constant focus on the crisis at hand increases everyone's anxiety. Focus on making positive memories with your child while you take a break from social media and the news. Eventually, a conversation starter might be "what did you do during the COVID-19 crisis?" Provide them with some cool memories to talk about in the future!
- 5 Maintain a normal routine to the extent possible:** Keep a regular schedule. Structure promotes a feeling of safety.
- 6 Be honest and accurate:** If kids don't have the facts, they will often use their imagination to fill in the blanks. Avoid this by answering your child's questions honestly. Remember, it's ok not to have all the answers. Just reassure them that you love them, and you will get through this together.

Some helpful links:

NPR: Parenting Difficult Conversations: What to say when the news is scary:

<https://www.npr.org/2019/04/24/716704917/when-the-news-is-scary-what-to-say-to-kids>

Raising Kids Who Thrive:

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive>